Unique partnership that will help develop new drug to treat mucositis in cancer patients.

Japanese firm Kyowa Hakko Kogyo is pioneering new treatment for the prevention of mucositis, a painful condition associated with the treatment of cancer, thanks to Manchester based company EpiStem Ltd.

This innovative partnership was made possible with the help of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), who facilitated a meeting between the two organisations, through the North of England Inward Investment Agency, which represents the NWDA in Japan and Bionow, the NWDA's biotechnology cluster organisation.

The meeting resulted in Kyowa Hakko signing an agreement to utilize EpiStem's specialised knowledge and research experience in stem cells relating to epithelial tissue, which is tissue that covers the body (skin) and the body's organs such as the stomach and mouth linings.

A staggering 85% of cancers affect the epithelial cells and access to research in this field will assist Kyowa Hakko to develop treatment for the prevention of oral mucositis, in which the lining of the mouth becomes sore and inflamed.

Mucositis occurs as a result of chemotherapy and bone marrow transplants with around 40% of chemotherapy patients and 75% of bone marrow transplant patients developing the condition.

This agreement will help Kyowa Hakko in their aim to create new drugs that will contribute to the health and prosperity of people around the world as well as helping EpiStem to extend their international presence to Japan.

Dr Linda Magee, NWDA Biotechnology Sector Director and Head of Bionow, said:

"Helping companies to compete internationally in order to secure economic growth is a key priority for the NWDA. The Agency is therefore delighted to have been able to support this unique partnership that will help Manchester based biotechnology company Epistem Ltd to expand its business operations to Japan and contribute to alleviating a very painful side effect of treatment for cancer patients."

--- end ---